

Executive Summary

Homelessness is often cited as one of the most prominent indicators of our nation's social and economic condition. Over the past 25 years, the number of people who are homeless has increased. Two trends are largely responsible for this rise in homelessness: the growing shortage of affordable housing and the increase in poverty.¹ Often homelessness is a result of circumstances that force people to choose between housing and other basic needs.² In an effort to generate valid qualitative and quantitative data regarding the issue of homelessness in San Bernardino County, the Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County (CAPSBC) contracted Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Count.

A similar study was conducted in San Bernardino County in 2003 with ASR as the lead researcher. At the core of the data collection methodology is the importance of homeless and formerly homeless persons participating in the data collection efforts. Between November 2002 and February 2007, there was a 39% increase in the number of homeless residents found in San Bernardino County. This executive summary provides an overview of the process, the results, and comparisons with the previous study.

Methodology

Two strategies were used to collect the data for this study: a point-in-time count and a comprehensive qualitative assessment via homeless peer interviews. This methodology is recommended by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and has been successfully implemented in several counties across California, including Los Angeles, Mendocino, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey Counties, and in the HUD case study of the City of Atlanta, as well as Fulton and DeKalb counties in Georgia. At the core of this research methodology is the conviction that homeless persons should be integrated into the research effort by their participation on census and survey data collection teams, as they possess first-hand knowledge of the places where homeless individuals are likely to be found. It is believed that a homeless census and survey effort would not be successful without the assistance of these individuals. Previous homeless enumeration efforts in other communities have proven the reliability and integrity of this approach and our research teams included trained homeless workers and volunteer service providers as well.

The first component of the project, a peer-oriented, point-in-time count of street and sheltered homeless, was accomplished by canvassing 244 census tracts throughout San Bernardino County in the early morning hours of February 27th and 28th, 2007. Data gathered by ASR for the shelter count involved the reporting of occupancies from shelters and institutions – emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and hotels and motels that accept vouchers. These occupancies were reported the nights before the census began.

¹ Coalition for the Homeless. 2006. *Why are People Homeless?* Fact Sheet #1. Washington, DC: National Coalition for the Homeless.

² Ibid.

The second component of the project consisted of comprehensive one-on-one interviews conducted by trained homeless workers and service providers. A total of 697 homeless San Bernardino County residents were interviewed from early March to early April, 2007. All research activities relied heavily on homeless residents and service providers in the data collection phase for both outreach and data quality. The results of the survey were then used to create a qualitative profile of the County's homeless population. This methodology is in compliance with the 2006 HUD recommended street and shelter survey methodology. It should be noted that like other homeless surveys, the respondent sample was not truly random, since there is insufficient data about the target population to develop a truly random sampling methodology.

The Number of Homeless Persons in San Bernardino County

The 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Census and Survey counted 6,111 homeless people on streets within the 244 tracts, and counted an additional 1,220 homeless people in emergency shelters, transitional housing, people using vouchers, and those in domestic violence shelters. Rehabilitation facilities reported having 145 homeless people. County hospitals and jails could not be reached to get a count of the number of homeless in those facilities. The final result of the 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Census and Survey is 7,331 persons, which excludes the rehabilitation, jails, and hospital figures.

Figure 1: Comparison of 2003 and 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Enumerations¹

Year of Study	Total Findings
2003 San Bernardino County Homeless Census	5,270
2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Census	7,331

¹Please note, the 2003 San Bernardino Homeless Census methodology was different than the methodology employed in the 2007 Homeless Census and is reviewed on the following page.

Figure 2: Comparison of 2003 and 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Enumerations by Supervisorial District¹

District	2003 Enumeration	2007 Enumeration
District 1	1,078	1,420
District 2	503	741
District 3	1,052	1,893
District 4	396	880
District 5	2,241	2,264
Overall Total	5,270	7,198

¹Please note, the 2007 enumeration total does not include 133 persons reported in County-wide Domestic Violence shelters. Because these are confidential locations, they have not been assigned to any district.

In reviewing the findings of the 2003 and 2007 enumerations, it is important to note key methodological changes:

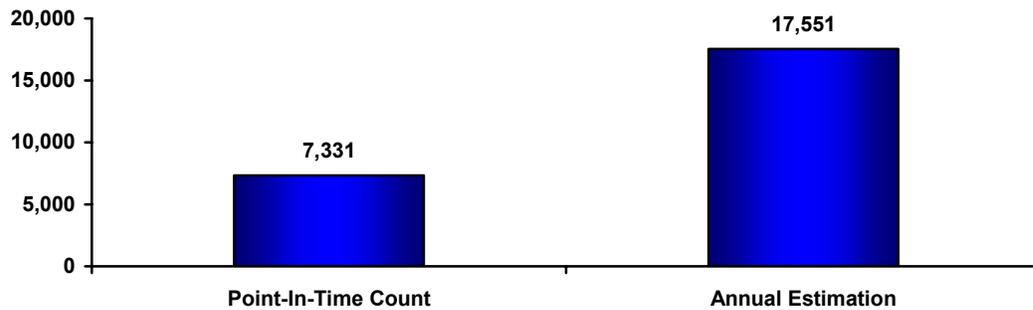
- 1) In 2003, County voting districts were the unit of analysis used to count the number of homeless on the streets of San Bernardino County. In 2007, Geographical Information System (GIS) census tract maps were used as the unit of analysis. GIS maps are more accurate than voting district maps, and help ensure an unduplicated count of the County's homeless.
- 2) In 2003, an informant count was used to supplement information on known whereabouts of the homeless. In 2007, an informant count was not used, as it may have resulted in a duplicated count.
- 3) In the 2003 figures, persons in cars, vans, RVs/campers, those in encampments, and those whose gender could not be identified were not reported separately. These figures are reported separately in the 2007 report.
- 4) In 2007, the HUD-reportable numbers do not include people in rehabilitation facilities, hospitals or jails due to HUD's more narrow definition of who is considered homeless for the point-in-time count. These numbers will be reported separately; and
- 5) Finally, the 2007 census uses a new formula to calculate the annual estimate of homeless people in San Bernardino County, so the annualizations from previous years are not directly comparable to those for 2007. This new formula provides greater compliance with HUD approved formulas.

The 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Survey yielded data regarding the frequency and length of homeless episodes, which were used to calculate an annual estimate of the number of people who experience homelessness in a year.

This new HUD-recommended formula produced an annual estimate of 17,551 persons who were homeless some time during 2006. Based on the 2006 population estimates from the State of California Department of Finance, this annual estimate of homelessness represents approximately 0.9% of San Bernardino County's total population of 1,978,923 people.³ This annual estimate is consistent with other research findings. The California Research Bureau estimates that approximately 361,000 people are homeless in California at any one time (approximately 1% of the general population), and estimates the total number of people who experience homelessness over the course of a year to be between one and two million people, or between 3% and 5% of California's general population.⁴ According to a 2002 study done by the National Coalition for the Homeless, approximately 3.5 million people, or about 1% of the U.S. general population, experience homelessness in a given year.

³ State of California, Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000-2050.

⁴ Foster, Lisa K. and Snowdon, Patricia. *Addressing Long-Term Homelessness: Permanent Supportive Housing*. California Research Bureau. August 2003.

Figure 3: Homeless Point-In-Time and Countywide Annual Estimation, 2007

All qualitative data about homelessness in this report were derived from direct surveys of a sample of homeless persons. As with all surveys of this nature, results are potentially biased by memory recall issues, though our review of the data does not indicate this was a significant issue. Additionally, for critical profile interest areas such as the prevalence of disabling conditions, the research design relied on self-described and self-defined responses. This is an approved method in homeless qualitative profiling due to the limitations in connecting homeless persons to their clinical profiles, if they exist.

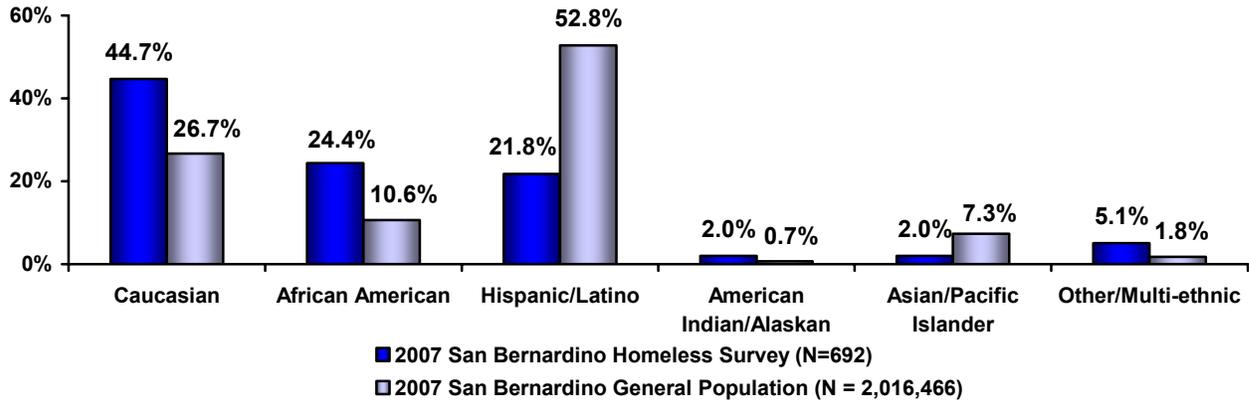
A Profile of Homelessness

Of the 7,331 homeless people identified in the 2007 point-in-time count, 17% were in shelter facilities and 83% were considered unsheltered. This highlights the importance of combined street-based and shelter-based enumerations, versus shelter-centered only enumeration efforts.

- Approximately 31% (1,887) of the homeless street population was living in vehicles (cars, campers, vans, etc.).
- Demographically, the population is diverse: the largest percentage of homeless survey respondents were Caucasian (45%) while 22% were Hispanic/Latino, 24% were African American, 2% were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 5% identified with other or multiple racial or ethnic groups. The two largest age groups were 41-50 years old (31%) and 31-40 years old (27%).

According to the State of California Department of Finance population estimates, Caucasians comprise 27% of the total population of San Bernardino County, and Hispanic/Latinos comprise 53% of the total population. African Americans comprise 11% of the population, while Asian/Pacific Islanders comprise 7% of the County's population. Therefore, African Americans (24%) and Caucasians (45%) were significantly over-represented in the survey, and Hispanic/Latinos (2%) were significantly under-represented as compared to the general population of San Bernardino County. Asian/Pacific Islanders (2%) were also under-represented in comparison.

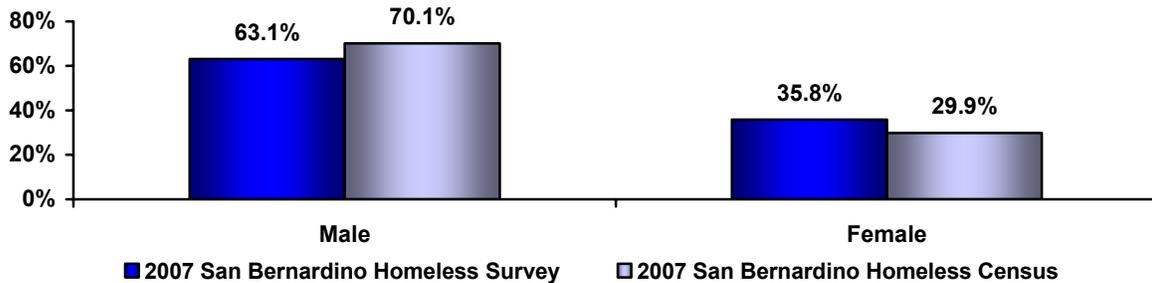
Figure 4: Race or Ethnicity of Respondents



San Bernardino County General Population data source: State of California, Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000-2050.

In the 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Survey, females were slightly over-represented in the survey population at 36%, as compared to the female homeless population of San Bernardino County of 30%. Males were slightly under-represented in the survey population at 63%, as compared to the male homeless population of San Bernardino County of 70%. Approximately 1% of the survey population were transgender.

Figure 5: Respondents by Gender



Note: Numbers for the survey results do not total 100%, due to 1.0% of the respondents identifying themselves as transgender.

Numbers for San Bernardino Homeless Survey: Male = 435, Female = 247.

Numbers for San Bernardino Census (Shelter and Street Count) Results: Male = 2,292, Female = 979.

The Chronic Homeless

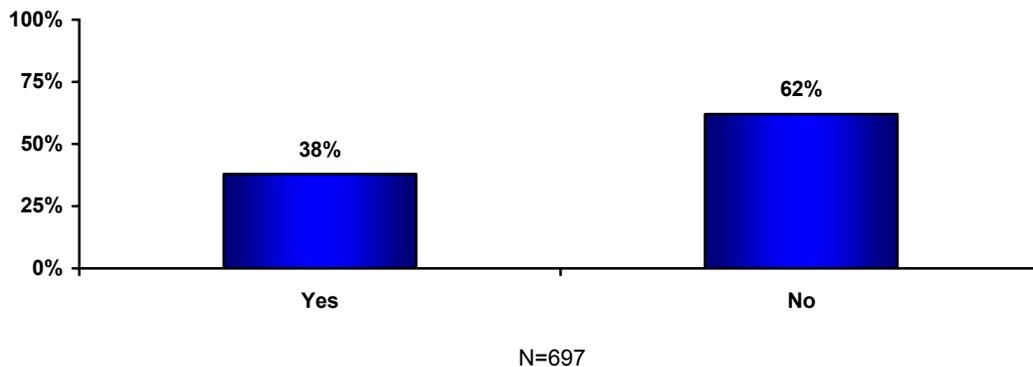
A profile of the chronically homeless was obtained from the data gathered from the homeless survey. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless person as:

An unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has been:

- 1. Continually homeless for one year or more; or*
- 2. Has experienced four or more episodes of homelessness within the past 3 years.*

It should be noted that “a disabling condition” includes physical, mental and developmental disabilities, as well as alcoholism, drug addiction, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), HIV/AIDS, or a chronic health condition. Of the 697 homeless survey respondents, approximately 38% (267 respondents) can be considered chronically homeless. This figure is higher than the one reported in the 2007 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, which compiled data from 2005 HUD applications of all the Continuums of Care. That report found that 23% of all homeless people are chronically homeless.⁵

Figure 6: Percentage of Respondents who are Chronically Homeless



⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, *The Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, 2007.

The Daily Condition of Homeless Persons – Survey Results

Frequency of Homelessness

- Approximately 50% of homeless survey respondents indicated they had been homeless only once within the past 12 months.
- Nearly 16% of homeless survey respondents had been homeless six or more times in the past 3 years.

Length of Homelessness

- Approximately 45% percent of all respondents had been homeless for one year or more.
- Of those, 18% of respondents indicated they had been homeless for more than three years.

Usual Sleeping Arrangements

- Twenty-six percent (26%) of survey respondents indicated their usual nighttime sleeping arrangement was outdoors.
- Over 22% indicated they usually spent the night in transitional housing, emergency or other types of shelters.
- Eleven percent (11%) of the respondents stayed in a car, van, or camper.
- Approximately 15% said their usual sleeping arrangements were in a garage, backyard storage structure, or a place other than the outdoors not meant to be used as shelter for human beings.
- An additional 7% slept in an abandoned building.

Unemployment

- Approximately 88% of the homeless were unemployed at the time of the survey.
- The three leading causes of unemployment were not having a permanent address (34%), no transportation (32%), or not having a phone (29%).

Access of Government Assistance

- Approximately 46% of survey respondents received government assistance. Over 54% indicated they received no government assistance through General Assistance, Food Stamps, WIC, SSI/SSDI, CalWorks, Medi-Cal/Medi-Care, Social Security or Veteran's Benefits.
- The most common benefit that was accessed by respondents was Food Stamps (25%).
- Of those respondents not receiving government assistance, the most common reason they did not think they were eligible (25%).

Children and Families

- Almost 23% of respondents reported having children.
- Nearly 5% of all survey respondents reported living with their children, while an additional 1% indicated they were living with their spouse *and* children.
- Of those with children under the age of 18, approximately 32% of respondents indicated they had children in foster care.
- Almost 20% of respondents lived with other homeless family or friends.

Domestic Violence

- Approximately 14% of female respondents and 6% of male respondents reported they were currently experiencing domestic violence.
- Approximately 9% of all respondents indicated they were currently experiencing domestic violence.

Disabling Conditions

- Overall, approximately 73% of survey respondents indicated they were experiencing a disabling condition. For the purposes of this survey, a disabling condition was identified as a physical disability, developmental disability, mental illness, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcohol or drug use, HIV/AIDS, or chronic health problems.
- Approximately 26% indicated they were experiencing a physical disability.
- Almost 34% of respondents reported they were experiencing alcohol abuse, while 35% indicated they were experiencing drug use.
- Nearly 26% of respondents were experiencing mental illness, while approximately 42% were experiencing depression and 13% were experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The Primary Reasons for Becoming Homeless

Overall, survey respondents most frequently cited loss of job or unemployment or alcohol or drug use as the primary event or condition that led to their current episode of homelessness; these causes were named by approximately 24% of respondents in 2007. It should be noted that this response is a subjective self-analysis and it is not possible to determine objectively which condition preceded the other. Other common causes of homelessness were argument with family or friends (10%), incarceration (6%) or family/domestic violence (4%). Approximately 10% of respondents indicated there were other primary reasons for their homelessness that were not listed on the survey.

Figure 7: Primary Reasons for Homelessness

Response	Percent of Total	
	2003	2007
Lost job ¹	28.4%	23.7%
High cost of housing/rent ²	17.5%	--
Alcohol or drug use	17.1%	23.5%
Argument/family or friend asked you to leave ³	2.8%	9.9%
Incarceration	7.1%	5.8%
Family/domestic violence ⁴	2.3%	4.4%
Landlord sold/stopped renting or reused property ⁵	--	4.1%
Mental health issues	1.7%	3.9%
Housing eviction ²	3.5%	--
Disability ²	3.3%	--
Don't know/declined to state ⁵	0.3%	3.2%
Landlord raised rent ⁵	--	3.0%
Illness or medical problem ⁶	1.4%	2.5%
Divorced or separated	4.9%	2.0%
Lost of parent/death ²	1.3%	--
No transportation/car ²	0.5%	--
Runaway/left home ²	0.4%	--
Gambling problem ⁵	--	1.6%
Hospitalization/treatment program ⁵	--	0.6%
For being Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual	--	0.6%
Hurricane Katrina ⁵	--	0.4%
Got too old for foster care	0.4%	0.4%
Other natural disaster/fire/flood ⁵	--	0.4%
Other	7.0%	9.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

N=1,375

N=689

¹This response was re-worded from "Unemployment" to "Lost job" in 2007.

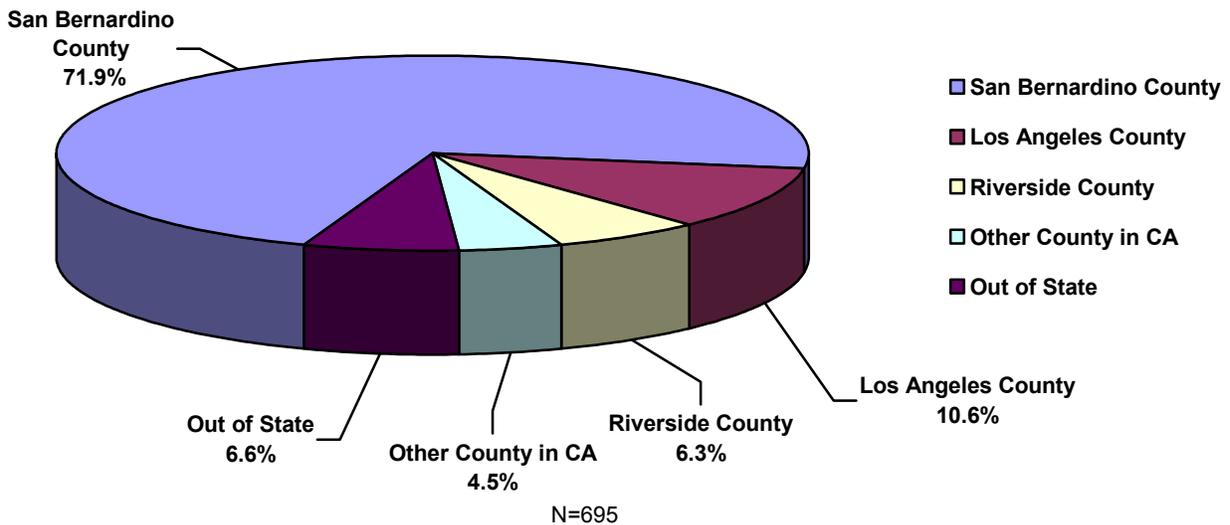
²This response was omitted from the 2007 survey.

³This response was re-worded from "Conflict with Family" to "Argument – friend or family asked you to leave" in 2007.

⁴Response option was re-worded in 2007 from "Family Violence" to "Family / Domestic Violence."

⁵New response option added in 2007.

⁶This response was re-worded from "Health/Medical Costs" to "Illness or medical problem" in 2007.

Figure 8: Where Respondents Were Most Recently Living at the Time They Became Homeless

Summary

The 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Census and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different needs. The prominence of women and homeless families with children demonstrates that the County's homeless population is varied and changing. The dramatic effect that homelessness has on families and children is clear, and correlations to future complicated case management issues are apparent. With unemployment and alcohol/drug abuse cited as the two primary cause of homelessness in 2007, it appears that economic and substance abuse issues are paramount obstacles for the homeless to overcome.

Overall, the results of this study show that homelessness has increased 39% in San Bernardino since 2003. This increase is significant and is inconsistent with results from other communities in the area. Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, and San Diego Counties all experienced slight or significant decreases in their point-in-time homeless counts. Though many services providers are working hard to provide services and support for the homeless population, the County still struggles with an increasing homeless population. With 83% of the homeless being unsheltered, it is clear that a great effort is needed to serve the growing needs of the County's homeless.

As the characteristics and needs of the homeless population continue to evolve, the importance of measuring such characteristics and needs heightens. This community-wide research effort, and the results presented in this report, hold the potential to assist San Bernardino County in the acquisition of additional funding for homeless services, as well as to help service providers craft and refine programs that truly reflect the needs of the dynamic population they serve. It is also hoped that this report will contribute to San Bernardino County Continuum of Care's efforts to end homelessness.

Our Vision

Fulfilling the promise of Community Action—building healthy communities in the spirit of dignity and hope, free from poverty.

Our Mission

Working in partnership with the San Bernardino communities to Support low-income residents achieving self-sufficiency.

The Promise

Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, Improves communities and makes America a better place to live.

We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County gratefully acknowledges the following project donors:

Pacific Life Foundation
City of San Bernardino Redevelopment Agency
Housing Authority of San Bernardino County
San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health
San Bernardino County Department of Public Health
San Bernardino County Human Services System
San Bernardino County Workforce Development Department
San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs
Children’s Fund of San Bernardino County

City of Barstow	City of Chino	City of Colton
City of Fontana	City of Hesperia	City of Ontario
City of Rialto	City of San Bernardino	City of Victorville
	Town of Apple Valley	

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**Community Action Partnership
of San Bernardino County**